



# TIPS | for parents of Babies

It's never too early to read to your baby. As soon as your baby is born, he or she starts learning. Just by talking to, playing with, and caring for your baby every day, you help your baby develop language skills necessary to become a reader. By reading with your baby, you foster a love of books and reading right from the start. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

## ■ Snuggle up with a book

When you hold your baby close and look at a book together, your baby will enjoy the snuggling and hearing your voice as well as the story. Feeling safe and secure with you while looking at a book builds your baby's confidence and love of reading.

## ■ Choose baby-friendly books

Books with bright and bold or high-contrast illustrations are easier for young babies to see, and will grab their attention. Books made of cloth or soft plastic (for the bathtub) or "board books" with sturdy cardboard pages are easier for a baby to handle.

## ■ Keep books where your baby can reach them

Make sure books are as easy to reach, hold, and look at as toys. Remember, a baby will do with a book what he does with everything else—put it in his mouth. And that's exactly what he's supposed to do, so you may only want to put chewable books within reach.

## ■ Talk with your baby—all day long

Describe the weather or which apples you are choosing at the grocery. Talk about the pictures in a book or things you see on a walk. Ask questions. By listening, your child learns words, ideas, and how language works.

## ■ Encourage your baby's coos, growls, and gurgles

They are your baby's way of communicating with you, and are important first steps toward speech. Encourage attempts to mimic you. The more your baby practices making sounds, the clearer they will become. Go ahead and moo, woof and honk!

## ■ Give baby a hand!

Encourage your baby to pick up crackers or peas, touch noses and toes, point to pictures and grab toys. The muscles in those little hands will grow strong, agile, and ready to turn pages.

## ■ Develop a daily routine (and make reading a part of it)

Routines can soothe a baby, and let a baby learn to predict what will happen next. The ability to predict is important when your child is older and is reading independently.

## ■ Sing, Read, Repeat

Read favorite stories and sing favorite songs over and over again. Repeated fun with books will strengthen language development and positive feelings about reading.

## ■ "Read" your baby

Pay attention to how your baby reacts to the book you are reading. Stop if your baby isn't enjoying the story and try another book or another time.

Visit [www.ReadingRockets.org](http://www.ReadingRockets.org) for more information on how you can launch a child into a bright future through reading.



# TIPS | for parents of Toddlers

Being a toddler is all about ACTION. Encourage continued language development and interest in books and reading by keeping things lively and engaging. Everyday experiences are full of opportunities to engage in conversation and develop language skills. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

## ■ Don't expect your toddler to sit still for a book

Toddlers need to MOVE, so don't worry if they act out stories or just skip, romp, or tumble as you read to them. They may be moving, but they are listening.

## ■ Recite rhymes, sing songs, and make mistakes!

Pause to let your toddler finish a phrase or chant a refrain. Once your toddler is familiar with the rhyme or pattern, make mistakes on purpose and get caught.

## ■ Choose engaging books

Books featuring animals or machines invite movement and making sounds. Books with flaps or different textures to touch keep hands busy. Books with detailed illustrations or recurring items hidden in the pictures are great for exploring and discussing.

## ■ Keep reading short, simple, and often

Toddlers frequently have shorter attention spans than babies. Look for text that is short and simple. Read a little bit, several times a day.

## ■ Encourage play that involves naming, describing, and communicating

Set up a zoo with all the stuffed animals. Stage a race with the toy cars. Put your toddler in charge and ask lots of questions.

## ■ Every day is an adventure when you're a toddler

Choose books about everyday experiences and feelings. Your child will identify with the characters as they dress, eat, visit, nap, and play.

## ■ Ask questions

Take time to listen to your toddler's answers. Toddlers have strong opinions and interesting ideas about the world. Encourage your toddler to tell you what he or she thinks. You'll build language skills and learn what makes your toddler tick at the same time.

## ■ Play to their favorites

Read favorite stories again and again. Seek out books about things your toddler especially likes—trains, animals, the moon. These books may extend a toddler's attention span and build enthusiasm for reading.

## ■ Not having fun?

Try a different story or a different time during the day. Reading with a very young child is primarily about building positive experiences with books, not finishing every book you start.

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# TIPS | for parents of Preschoolers

Read early and read often. The early years are critical to developing a lifelong love of reading. It's never too early to begin reading to your child! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Read together every day.**

Read to your child every day. Make this a warm and loving time when the two of you can cuddle close.

■ **Give everything a name.**

Build your child's vocabulary by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, "Look at that airplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?"

■ **Say how much you enjoy reading.**

Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. Talk about "story time" as the favorite part of your day.

■ **Read with fun in your voice.**

Read to your child with humor and expression. Use different voices. Ham it up!

■ **Know when to stop.**

Put the book away for awhile if your child loses interest or is having trouble paying attention.

■ **Be interactive.**

Discuss what's happening in the book, point out things on the page, and ask questions.

■ **Read it again and again.**

Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time!

■ **Talk about writing, too.**

Mention to your child how we read from left to right and how words are separated by spaces.

■ **Point out print everywhere.**

Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find a new word on each outing.

■ **Get your child evaluated.**

Please be sure to see your child's pediatrician or teacher as soon as possible if you have concerns about your child's language development, hearing, or sight.

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# TIPS | for parents of Kindergartners

Play with letters, words, and sounds! Having fun with language helps your child learn to crack the code of reading. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

## ■ Talk to your child.

Ask your child to talk about his day at school. Encourage him to explain something they did, or a game he played during recess.

## ■ Say silly tongue twisters.

Sing songs, read rhyming books, and say silly tongue twisters. These help kids become sensitive to the sounds in words.

## ■ Read it and experience it.

Connect what your child reads with what happens in life. If reading a book about animals, relate it to your last trip to the zoo.

## ■ Use your child's name.

Point out the link between letters and sounds. Say, "John, the word *jump* begins with the same sound as your name. *John, jump*. And they both begin with the same letter, J."

## ■ Play with puppets.

Play language games with puppets. Have the puppet say, "My name is *Mark*. I like words that rhyme with my name. Does *park* rhyme with *Mark*? Does *ball* rhyme with *Mark*?"

## ■ Trace and say letters.

Have your child use a finger to trace a letter while saying the letter's sound. Do this on paper, in sand, or on a plate of sugar.

## ■ Write it down.

Have paper and pencils available for your child to use for writing. Working together, write a sentence or two about something special. Encourage your child to use the letters and sounds he or she is learning about in school.

## ■ Play sound games.

Practice blending sounds into words. Ask "Can you guess what this word is? *m - o - p*." Hold each sound longer than normal.

## ■ Read it again and again.

Go ahead and read your child's favorite book for the 100th time! As you read, pause and ask your child about what is going on in the book.

## ■ Talk about letters and sounds.

Help your child learn the names of the letters and the sounds the letters make. Turn it into a game! "I'm thinking of a letter and it makes the sound mmmmmm."

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# TIPS | for parents of First Graders

Give your child lots of opportunities to read aloud. Inspire your young reader to practice every day! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

■ **Don't leave home without it.**

Bring along a book or magazine any time your child has to wait, such as at a doctor's office. Always try to fit in reading!

■ **Once is not enough.**

Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems. Re-reading helps kids read more quickly and accurately.

■ **Dig deeper into the story.**

Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Say something like, "Why do you think Clifford did that?"

■ **Take control of the television.**

It's difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a free-time activity.

■ **Be patient.**

When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind your child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.

■ **Pick books that are at the right level.**

Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.

■ **Play word games.**

Have your child sound out the word as you change it from *mat* to *fat* to *sat*; from *sat* to *sag* to *sap*; and from *sap* to *sip*.

■ **I read to you, you read to me.**

Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.

■ **Gently correct your young reader.**

When your child makes a mistake, gently point out the letters he or she overlooked or read incorrectly. Many beginning readers will guess wildly at a word based on its first letter.

■ **Talk, talk, talk!**

Talk with your child every day about school and things going on around the house. Sprinkle some interesting words into the conversation, and build on words you've talked about in the past.

■ **Write, write, write!**

Ask your child to help you write out the grocery list, a thank you note to Grandma, or to keep a journal of special things that happen at home. When writing, encourage your child to use the letter and sound patterns he or she is learning at school.

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# TIPS | for parents of Second Graders

Find ways to read, write, and tell stories together with your child. Always applaud your young reader and beginning story writer! The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

## ■ Tell family tales.

Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young.

## ■ Create a writing toolbox.

Fill a box with drawing and writing materials. Find opportunities for your child to write, such as the shopping list, thank you notes, or birthday cards.

## ■ Be your child's #1 fan.

Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written for school. Be an enthusiastic listener.

## ■ One more time with feeling.

When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read.

## ■ Invite an author to class.

Ask an author to talk to your child's class about the writing process. Young children often think they aren't smart enough if they can't sit down and write a perfect story on the first try.

## ■ Create a book together.

Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

## ■ Do storytelling on the go.

Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky.

## ■ Point out the relationship between words.

Explain how related words have similar spellings and meanings. Show how a word like *knowledge*, for example, relates to a word like *know*.

## ■ Use a writing checklist.

Have your child create a writing checklist with reminders such as, "Do all of my sentences start with a capital? Yes/No."

## ■ Quick, quick.

Use new words your child has learned in lively flash card or computer drills. Sometimes these help kids automatically recognize and read words, especially those that are used frequently.

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# TIPS | for parents of Third Graders

Read about it, talk about it, and think about it! Find ways for your child to build understanding, the ultimate goal of learning how to read. The tips below offer some fun ways you can help your child become a happy and confident reader. Try a new tip each week. See what works best for your child.

## ■ Make books special.

Turn reading into something special. Take your kids to the library, help them get their own library card, read with them, and buy them books as gifts. Have a favorite place for books in your home or, even better, put books everywhere.

## ■ Get them to read another one.

Find ways to encourage your child to pick up another book. Introduce him or her to a series like *The Boxcar Children* or *Harry Potter* or to a second book by a favorite author, or ask the librarian for additional suggestions.

## ■ Crack open the dictionary.

Let your child see you use a dictionary. Say, "Hmm, I'm not sure what that word means... I think I'll look it up."

## ■ Talk about what you see and do.

Talk about everyday activities to build your child's background knowledge, which is crucial to listening and reading comprehension. Keep up a running patter, for example, while cooking together, visiting somewhere new, or after watching a TV show.

## ■ First drafts are rough.

Encourage your child when writing. Remind him or her that writing involves several steps. No one does it perfectly the first time.

## ■ Different strokes for different folks.

Read different types of books to expose your child to different types of writing. Some kids, especially boys, prefer nonfiction books.

## ■ Teach your child some "mind tricks".

Show your child how to summarize a story in a few sentences or how to make predictions about what might happen next. Both strategies help a child comprehend and remember.

## ■ "Are we there yet?"

Use the time spent in the car or bus for wordplay. Talk about how jam means something you put on toast as well as cars stuck in traffic. How many other homonyms can your child think of? When kids are highly familiar with the meaning of a word, they have less difficulty reading it.

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